

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY ARA/LA GECHAFIN

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 120865

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS

FOLLOWING REPEAT LIMA 2238 ACTION SECSTATE INFO LA PAZ QUITO
SANTIAGO USCINCSO MAY 22

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 2238

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PE

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT VELASCO

1. MAKING HIS FIRST APPEARANCE BEFORE CAMERAS (INCLUDING TELEVISION) SINCE HIS APRIL 24 MEETING WITH AUSTRALIA'S GOUGH WHITLAM, PRESIDENT VELASCO MET WITH CUZCO CAMPESION LEADER SATURNINO HUILLCA ON MAY 21. REGALED IN A TYPICAL COSTUME, HUILLCA PRESENTED VELASCO WITH A PONCHO AND CUZCO POTATOES AND EMBRACED THE PRESIDENT. THE LATTER STOOD BEHIND HIS DESK THROUGHOUT AN OBVIOUSLY STAGED CEREMONY WHICH APPEARS TO HAVE LASTED TWENTY MINUTES. HUILLCA SPOKE IN QUECHUA WHICH HAD TO BE TRANSLATED FOR VELASCO, WHO STATED THAT QUECHUA WOULD SOON BE DECLARED PERU'S SECOND OFFICIAL LANGUAGE.

2. VELASCO HAS NEITHER HAD A NORMAL PRESS CONFERENCE NOR RECEIVED AMBASSADORIAL CREDENTIALS SINCE JANUARY 29, WHEN HE HELD A
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MARATHON FOUR-HOUR CONFERENCE TO PROVE HE WAS WELL. NONETHELESS, VELASCO SUFFERED WHAT WAS PROBABLY A STROKE ON FEBRUARY 28

AND HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO TEND NORMALLY TO HIS DUTIES SINCE THEN.
MUCH OF HIS TIME IS APPARENTLY SPENT RESTING AT HIS COUNTRY HOME.
HE HAS MET WITH HIS CABINET ALTHOUGH IT IS UNCLEAR HOW LONG HIS
PARTICIPATION IN THESE MEETINGS LASTED. PERU'S OFFICIALLY CONTROLLED
MEDIA INSIST NEVERTHELESS THAT VELASCO IS WELL.

3. VELASCO'S RECLUSIVE BEHAVIOR CONTRASTS SHARPLY WITH THAT OF
MOREALES BERMUDEZ, WHO HAS BEEN BARNSTORMING IN NORTHERN PERU WITH
EIGHT MINISTERS IN TOW (SEPTTEL). AS FAR AS APPEARANCES ARE CON-
CERNED, VELASCO IS REIGNING WHILE MOREALES BERMUDEZ RULES. IN
ACTUALITY, NO MAJOR DECISIONS ARE BEING TAKEN WITHOUT CONSULTING
WITH VELASCO WHO REFUSES TO BE COUNTED OUT DESPITE HIS INFIRM-
ITIES.

DEAN UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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